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Report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the letter dated 15 December 2005 (S/2005/794) addressed to me from the President of the Security Council. In my last report to the Council on the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, issued on 17 November 2003 (S/2003/1099), the preparatory process for the International Conference was described, including its objectives, participation and structure. Since that report, there have been major developments regarding the International Conference, including the successful organization of the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region in Dar-es-Salaam, on 19 and 20 December 2004; increased political dialogue between the countries of the region, chiefly as a result of the platform provided and the momentum achieved by the International Conference; and preparations regarding the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact. The second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference, which was scheduled to take place in December 2005 in Nairobi, was postponed. The reasons for the postponement are outlined in paragraphs 54 to 57 below.

2. The present report comprises six sections, which discuss: the outcomes of the Dar-es-Salaam Summit and the directives of the Heads of State and Government of the Great Lakes region for the preparation of the Security, Stability and Development Pact, expected to be signed at the second Summit (sect. II); the political and technical framework as well as on the timeline for the preparation of the proposed Pact (sect. III); the major components of the draft pact (sect. IV); the benefits of the International Conference (sect. V); the implications of the postponement of the Nairobi Summit (sect. VI); and observations and recommendations on the way forward (sect. VII).

II. Dar-es-Salaam Summit

3. The preparatory process for the International Conference began in Nairobi in June 2003 with the first meeting of the national coordinators of the then six members (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). It continued through the second half of 2003

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and through 2004, during which time agreement was reached on the priority themes and on the political and technical frameworks of the Conference, the calendar of activities and the process leading to the first Summit. The period was also used for the formation, in December 2003, of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, consisting of 28 countries, mainly from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), but which also included three African countries (Gabon, Nigeria and South Africa) and 10 international organizations. The Group of Friends provides a functional link between the Conference process and the partners supporting it politically, financially and technically.

4. During this period, the United Nations and the African Union held region-wide consultations with the core countries of the Regional Preparatory Committee, as well as with key stakeholders, including African subregional organizations, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), women, youth, regional non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, parliamentarians and trade unions, in order to reflect the inclusiveness of the Conference process. Those consultations and meetings were aimed at ensuring the ownership of the process by the core countries and also at making sure that all the issues within the four themes of the International Conference (peace and security; democracy and good governance; economic development and regional integration; and humanitarian and social issues) were adequately discussed and interlinked through a common regional and practical approach. The draft of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, which takes account of these substantive consultations, was also negotiated and agreed upon.

5. By consensus of the participating States, a seventh member, Zambia, was added. However, a serious crisis over its membership had to be overcome when four among the co-opted countries, Angola, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, subsequently asked to join the Conference as full members. It took considerable time and effort by Conference members, the United Nations, the African Union and other stakeholders to achieve a breakthrough in time for these four countries to be admitted and to attend the first summit.

6. The first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which took place in Dar-es-Salaam on 19 and 20 November 2004, marked the end of the first phase of the Conference process. The Summit, in which the Chairperson of the African Union and I participated as coordinators on behalf of the African Union and the United Nations, was attended by all 11 core countries (Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Kenya, Rwanda, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia) at the Heads of State and Government level. Other Heads of State and representatives of co-opted members (including Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe), together with the President of South Africa, representatives of the Group of Friends, international and regional partners and observers also attended. In Dar-es-Salaam, the member countries adopted a Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, now commonly known as the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration.

7. The Dar-es-Salaam Declaration constitutes a landmark for the Great Lakes region. It is the first regional and comprehensive political document in which all the leaders jointly commit to transforming the Great Lakes region into an area of peace, security and development and set out a vision and a road map for the future.

8. The Declaration contains policy priorities and guiding principles in key areas of the four themes of the International Conference: peace and security; democracy and good governance; economic development and regional integration; and humanitarian and social issues. The policies range from security at the common borders and region-wide to small arms control, from adherence to international conventions on human rights to ending impunity and promotion of good governance, from sustainable integrated economic development to the fight against plundering of resources and corruption, and from combating sexual violence to finding sustainable solutions to the protracted problems of refugees and internally displaced persons.

9. The Declaration also sets guidelines on the protocols and programmes of action of what is to become the legally binding Security, Stability and Development Pact to be submitted for adoption at the second Summit of the Conference in Nairobi.

III. Framework for the preparation of the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact

10. In the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, the Heads of State and Government of the International Conference mandated a Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, with the assistance of the Regional Preparatory Committee, to prepare selected, concrete, achievable and measurable draft protocols and programmes of action in each of the four themes of the International Conference.

Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee

11. The Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee brings together the 11 ministers, principally the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, in charge of the organization of the International Conference in the respective member countries. Ministers from neighbouring co-opted countries (Botswana, Egypt, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe), representatives of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, the Joint United Nations/African Union secretariat, African subregional organizations, United Nations agencies, programmes and funds and observers also participate in the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, with various roles and prerogatives.

12. Since the first Summit, the Committee has been chaired by the United Republic of Tanzania, custodian of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, and, more particularly, by its then Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Chairperson headed the supervision of the draft programmes of action, protocols and projects of the Pact and has been using his good offices to resolve difficult situations, from the most technical level on the content of the draft documents, to the highest political level, including defusing disagreements and mounting tension between member countries, as well as finding a solution to the issue of the date of the Nairobi Summit.

13. Using the priority policy options and principles agreed upon by the Heads of State and Government in the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee reviews and approves all the draft protocols for consideration by the second Summit, as well as all the draft project documents, which are the components of the programmes of action of the four themes of the Conference,

elaborated by the Regional Preparatory Committee. The Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee is also entrusted with mobilization, sensitization and advocacy vis-à-vis the partners in the International Conference, both at regional and international levels. In this regard, in September 2005, the Ministers in charge of the organization of the Conference met in the margins of the General Assembly to exchange ideas on progress made in organizing the second Summit and also to interact with Ministers from partner countries on orientation, priorities and the modalities of political, technical and financial support.

14. Since its establishment, the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee has met twice, the first time in Kigali, in February 2005, at which time the Ministers approved the structure and functioning of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee and the Regional Preparatory Committee, the terms of reference of the draft protocols and programmes of action and projects and the plan of activities for the second phase of the International Conference leading to the Nairobi Summit, as well as the profile of the required expertise for the drafting of the documents and the budget during the critical drafting period towards the second Summit. At its second meeting, in July 2005 in Lusaka, the Committee reviewed the draft protocols and projects, prioritized them and discussed the follow-up mechanism beyond the second Summit. A third and last meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place in Bangui, in mid-November 2005, in order to finalize the draft programmes of action, protocols and projects before the Nairobi Summit. Following the postponement of the Summit, the meeting of the Committee in Bangui was rescheduled and is now to be held in February 2006.

Regional Preparatory Committee

15. The Regional Preparatory Committee is the driving force behind the coordination of the technical preparation of the draft programmes of action, protocols, projects and any other documents to be presented to the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee. The Regional Preparatory Committee brings together diverse elements, including the national coordinators and their deputies, assisted by national focal points in each of the respective thematic clusters, as well as representatives from women's, youth and civil society groups. The representatives of co-opted members, the Group of Friends, observers and subregional and regional African partners also participate in the Committee's meetings.

16. The meetings of the Regional Preparatory Committee preceded and prepared the two meetings of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee held in February and July 2005. However, an extraordinary session of the Regional Preparatory Committee took place in Luanda from 26 to 30 September 2005 to undertake a detailed review of all the draft documents before they were to be submitted to the last meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, which, as mentioned above, was scheduled to take place in Bangui in October 2005.

17. Between the meetings of the Regional Preparatory Committee, and in order to prepare them, technical, thematic task forces were established as the expert arm of the Committee. The task forces are responsible for the technical preparation of the draft project documents and protocols for discussion during the meetings of the Committee. Four task forces, reflecting the four themes of the Conference, have been established since the first meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee. In the light of the recommendations of that meeting, the task forces are

composed of three governmental and non-governmental experts per theme. The work of the experts has also been facilitated by the inputs of the relevant United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, the Commission of the African Union and contributions from the other African and non-African partners involved in the process, notably the Group of Friends and African subregional organizations.

National coordinators

18. The national coordinators play a key role in the International Conference. They deal with all aspects of the process and their formal as well as informal meetings facilitated by the Joint United Nations/African Union secretariat are key to the success of the entire preparatory process from the political, technical and organizational point of view.

Joint United Nations/African Union secretariat

19. The Office of my Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region and the Commission of the African Union, which opened an office in Nairobi in 2004, have from the onset assumed the role of secretariat to the International Conference. The secretariat, which is a vital link between the core countries and their partners, has also performed a number of critical tasks, including: preparation and coordination of the draft programmes of action, protocols and project documents; preparation, facilitation and reporting of all meetings; collection and dissemination of information on the International Conference; advocacy and follow-up on issues requiring further consultations; and coordination of the whole United Nations system within the Conference process. The secretariat has also been responsible for handling all logistical and administrative matters related to the organization of the post-Dar-es-Salaam meetings for the elaboration of the draft programmes of action, protocols and projects (see annex I).

20. Following the postponement of the Nairobi Summit, the national coordinators, at their last meeting on 7 November 2005, requested the secretariat to prepare and organize certain meetings during the first half of 2006 (see annex II).

IV. Current status of the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact

21. The positive results achieved at the first Summit of the International Conference, which culminated in the signing of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration and increased political dialogue between the countries of the region, chiefly as a result of the platform provided and the momentum achieved by the Conference, have led the Heads of State and Government of the International Conference to recommend the adoption of a Security, Stability and Development Pact, which will be composed of two elements: the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration and the programmes of action, protocols and projects being prepared.

22. The current draft to be submitted to the next meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee in February 2006 acknowledges the essential links that are the raison d'être of the Conference: links between the countries of the Great Lakes region; between their peoples; between the Governments and their peoples; between the region and its neighbours; between the region and its regional and international

partners; between the issues of peace, democracy, economic development and their social and humanitarian consequences; and between all projects within each theme. For that reason, all the protocols and projects contained in the Pact are cross-border and regional in nature.

23. Following a long and intensive process of drafting, consultations, selection and ongoing prioritization, the draft documents currently being finalized focus on a limited number of selected policies and activities in the framework of the four thematic clusters of the Conference, the most important and innovative of which are described below.

Peace and security

24. In the crucial peace and security cluster of the International Conference, following the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, emphasis has been placed on a draft protocol on non-aggression and mutual defence for the Great Lakes region. This protocol aims at achieving the following objectives: to prevent or find a collective peaceful solution to armed conflicts involving, directly or indirectly, more than one State; to design concrete means to collectively stop all threats to peace and security in the region; to safeguard the sovereignty of each member State and respect the principle of inviolability of borders; to forbid the use of the territory of any member State for any act of subversion or aggression against one or more neighbouring States; and to prescribe collective measures to forbid and fight armed groups. At an operational level, the non-aggression and mutual defence draft protocol uses the same 12 security zones identified in the series of draft joint border security management projects cited below. It aims at integrating all key projects and ensuring their complementarity and facilitating the overall coordination of the implementation of the Pact.

25. A series of draft projects related to joint security management of the common borders, divided into 12 specific zones, have been set as major priorities. These include projects on the disarmament of armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; on disarmament of armed pastoralists in border areas between Uganda, the Sudan and Kenya; and on border management in zones affecting parts of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

26. More specifically, the project on the disarmament of armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is based on the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999. It focuses on: political and diplomatic support for the current efforts towards voluntary and forceful disarmament; security sector reform in the concerned countries, which it aims to undertake in conjunction with United Nations peacekeeping missions in the region and other partners; and capacity-building in border security management for relevant State authorities and border communities and enhancing economic activities among these communities. The project on armed pastoralists in border areas between Uganda, the Sudan and Kenya aims principally at stopping transborder cattle rustling raids, which are a major security threat in this area. It proposes several remedies, including promoting alternative economic activities, coordinated sensitization of the concerned populations and joint disarmament activities, as well as construction and rehabilitation of physical and social infrastructure at the common borders. It is complemented by activities aimed at

enhancing human security in its global sense in the 12 identified border zones. This project is also linked to the economic development and regional integration cluster.

27. Other priority projects are aimed, in conformity with the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, at supporting, harmonizing and enhancing existing regional initiatives and mechanisms. They deal with the curbing of proliferation of small arms and light weapons, in partnership with the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons, based in Nairobi, the curbing of terrorism and transnational crime, in partnership with the Regional Centre to Combat Terrorism launched in 2005 in Kenya; demining and the fight against the use of landmines, in partnership with the existing mechanisms in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. The fight against transnational crime is, for obvious reasons, also linked to the democracy and good governance as well as to the economic development and regional integration clusters.

Democracy and good governance

28. In accordance with the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, in the cluster of democracy and good governance, key draft projects gravitate around the establishment of a regional centre to promote democracy, good governance, human rights and civic education and include a forum for parliamentarians and non-institutional regional forums for women, youth and civil society.

29. In particular, the priority draft protocols as selected by the member countries are on: judicial cooperation; democracy and good governance; and the critical draft protocol on the prevention and repression of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as all forms of discrimination and the project that accompanies it, which includes the fight against impunity and the promotion of civil education and the culture of peace and tolerance.

Economic development and regional integration

30. The economic development and regional integration cluster focuses on the draft project on transborder development basins, which aims to contribute to strengthening local cooperation among border populations and neighbouring countries and to ensure more effective border security management.

31. In addressing the important and sensitive issue of the plundering of national resources in the region, which is a major security threat, the member countries have prepared both a key draft protocol and an important draft project on the illegal exploitation of natural resources, backed by a proposed regional mechanism for the certification of precious minerals. Other important priority draft projects focus on revitalization of infrastructure projects (railway corridors, pipelines), the relaunching of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (Communauté économique des pays des Grands Lacs (CEPGL)) and the promotion of the Great Lakes region as a special reconstruction and development zone, accompanied by a specific reconstruction fund. The draft protocol on the zone and the draft project on the fund are also linked to the critical draft projects on border security management in the peace and security cluster.

32. The revamping of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, an organization that has been dormant for several years, carries significant hope for the region, especially for its founding members, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of

the Congo and Rwanda. If successful, and there are regional and international signs that it might be, the revival and subsequent enlargement of the Community would constitute an important opportunity for development of the Great Lakes region through regional integration. It would also serve as a major instrument of economic cooperation and peacebuilding among countries of the region, which have been the most affected by interrelated conflicts.

33. Other key draft projects focus on transport infrastructure development. It is important to note that, owing to the size and cost of some of those projects, especially those involving infrastructure rehabilitation, there has been particular emphasis on the member countries providing their own seed funding, as well as searching for financial resources from the private sector, an initiative that should be encouraged.

Humanitarian and social issues

34. The emphasis in this cluster is to provide sustainable protection and assistance to the most vulnerable populations. There is a key draft protocol on the protection and assistance of the internally displaced persons, which, if adopted and implemented, would be the first legal document to enforce the guiding principles on internal displacement already proposed by my Special Representative on internally displaced persons. Another important draft protocol is on the prevention of sexual violence against women and children.

35. Other important draft projects aim at disaster preparedness and response, resuming the provision of basic social services and elaborating a coordinated approach to tackling dangerous infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS through the two existing subregional initiatives.

Cross-cutting themes

36. Cross-cutting themes such as gender, HIV/AIDS, human rights, environment and human settlements are reflected in all four themes of the International Conference. Several separate consultations covering these subjects were organized in the course of the preparation of the draft programmes of action, protocols and projects. In addition, representatives for these five cross-cutting themes have been regularly participating in the process. More specifically, my representative has often met with representatives from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to assure that these issues are adequately integrated in the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration and the current draft documents that will form part of the future Security, Stability and Development Pact.

Follow-up mechanisms

37. The member countries of the International Conference have clearly underlined the need for the establishment of a regional follow-up institutional mechanism, under the collegial ownership of member countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region and supported by the United Nations and the African Union.

38. The current follow-up mechanism to the International Conference serves three main functions: (a) supervising and overseeing the implementation of the Security, Stability and Development Pact in its different components; (b) carrying out functions related to conflict prevention, management and peaceful settlement of conflicts; and (c) keeping close links with high-level regional and international institutions related to the themes of the Conference and to issues in the Great Lakes region. It is composed of three main organs: the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference; the Inter-Ministerial Committee; and the regional Conference secretariat.

39. The Summit of Heads of State and Government would be the supreme organ and the main decision-making body of the International Conference. Its chairmanship would rotate among the participating member countries. Its Chair would play a role in conflict prevention and crisis management activities and would maintain relations with international organizations, non-member States and all other partners on behalf of the Conference. It would be held once every two years with the possibility of holding an extraordinary session if the Heads of State deem it necessary, particularly in the initial stages.

40. The Inter-Ministerial Committee would be the executive organ of the Conference and would determine implementation strategies and carry out regular monitoring of the implementation process. Based on the nature of the issues to be discussed, other Ministers could be invited to attend the meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Conference, which would be held twice a year.

41. The regional Conference secretariat, comprising officials from member countries of the International Conference, in the spirit of regional ownership of the process, would constitute the technical arm and coordinating body of the Conference and be headed by a director-general or an executive secretary.

42. In addition, each member country would establish a national Conference coordination mechanism that would maintain contact with the Conference secretariat and would ensure the participation of the various social actors in the implementation of the plan of action of the International Conference.

43. The Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region and the other partners have been invited to continue their support to the Conference and to contribute to the establishment of the regional secretariat.

44. The Joint United Nations-African Union secretariat should remain in place for a limited period after the signing of the Security, Stability and Development Pact and should assist the conference regional secretariat to initiate the implementation of the Pact.

V. The benefits of the International Conference

45. As shown in the above section on the draft Security, Stability and Development Pact, most of the draft protocols and projects selected within the framework of the International Conference, address the root causes of insecurity, conflicts, war and instability in the Great Lakes region. If adopted and implemented, they would contribute to transform the whole region into a space of sustainable peace, security, stability and development.

46. Even at this stage, prior to the adoption of the Pact, significant benefits have been noticed. In a region rife with tensions, the Conference process has contributed to maintaining open lines of communication among the parties at all levels. It has helped to build much-needed confidence in areas where mutual suspicion has been the norm. Moreover, the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration is a landmark document, entailing far-reaching commitments that are being followed up and built upon as the Conference proceeds. Together with the proposed Pact, when adopted and implemented, the provisions contained in both documents would provide an inclusive framework for durable peace and economic and social development throughout the region, addressing these matters in an integrated manner.

A careful selection of initiatives which address regional needs

47. The draft protocols and projects slated for adoption in Nairobi have been the subject of prioritization and can be divided into two categories. The first pertains to those which are related to existing mechanisms covering part of the Great Lakes region. In order to avoid duplication, the member countries of the International Conference have decided to request that the existing mechanisms be put in charge of the implementation of those draft protocols or projects. This is mainly the case in the cluster of economic development and regional integration. This approach is in accordance with the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, which calls for the promotion of common policies to harmonize and implement existing agreements and mechanisms.

48. The second category of draft projects and protocols is aimed at filling voids at the regional level. This is mainly the case, for example, in the peace and security cluster, the democracy and good governance cluster and the humanitarian and social issues cluster. This is in accordance with the call in the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration for the establishment of an effective regional security framework, initiatives on prevention, management and peaceful settlement of conflicts, including the adoption of non-aggression and common defence pacts as well as the strengthening of cooperation in the area of defence and security at common borders, with the view to enhancing good neighbourliness and multisectoral cooperation.

49. Most of the protocols and projects are interlinked in substance as well as in their modalities for implementation, in accordance with the regional vision, articulated in the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, for the promotion of sustainable peace, security, democracy and development. The linkages between and within clusters illustrate the pertinence of the human security approach.

An integrated and inclusive process

50. As mentioned above, in addition to the representatives of Governments, key non-State stakeholders from the region have also been involved in the Conference, including women, youth and civil society organizations. In keeping with this spirit, the drafting of the protocols and projects also involved other actors, notably African subregional organizations. Six subregional organizations, the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, have pledged their support to the process and have been attending most of the regional meetings. The same is true of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Their continued involvement in the

planning and implementation of the Security, Stability and Development Pact, where they will have a leading coordination role, will be of critical importance.

51. With regard to the partnership between the region and the United Nations, relevant departments, agencies, funds and programmes have continued to provide technical advice. Four United Nations entities have been assigned the role of facilitators of the four clusters: the Department for Political Affairs; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the Economic Commission for Africa and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Each entity has mobilized and coordinated the inputs of the various United Nations agencies in its area of expertise towards the technical preparation of the draft protocols and projects. These inputs were in various forms and included data collection, provision of financial and human resources, expert advice, sensitization and advocacy and support at the country level. It should also be mentioned that, throughout the process, UNDP managed the multidonor Trust Fund of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, which funded most of the preparatory meetings.

52. Active cooperation with the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) has existed from the outset, with representatives of the two peacekeeping missions regularly attending the regional meetings of the International Conference. The role of MONUC cannot be overemphasized as most of the draft protocols and projects have the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a central element. This cooperation should be continued and enhanced to ensure that the implementation of several draft projects, namely in the field of peace and security, takes into account MONUC's concerns and expertise and is in synergy with the activities planned or already on the ground in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

53. Another crucial aspect of the inclusive approach of the International Conference process is the involvement of the international development partners. The Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region has been involved in the Conference process since December 2003. It has provided strong political, financial and technical support to the International Conference, not only during the first phase leading to the Dar-es-Salaam Summit, but also, and even more, during this current phase. This includes, in particular, the active participation of their experts and co-chairs in the work of the technical thematic task force, the Regional Preparatory Committee and the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee. The co-chairs of the Group of Friends, Canada and the Netherlands, on behalf of the larger group of countries and multilateral organizations, have also held regular consultations with the member countries of the Conference, as well as with the joint secretariat. The financial contribution of the Group of Friends has been critical to the success of the Conference since it has provided most of the funds for the preparatory meetings. I would like to use this opportunity to once again express my gratitude to the members of the Group of Friends for their solid and continuous support to the process and to encourage their continued assistance.

VI. The postponement of the Nairobi Summit and its implications

54. The request by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to postpone the Nairobi Summit, initially scheduled to take place on 15 and

16 December 2005, was motivated by two factors. It coincided with the national referendum on the draft Constitution which took place on 18 and 19 December 2005, and with the indication by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that they favoured the holding of the International Conference following the conclusion of the transitional process in the country, which is expected to end on 30 June 2006.

55. The postponement of the Nairobi Summit clearly had a negative impact on the process. It has heightened the risk of a loss of the momentum achieved so far. In addition, new negative events in the region could render the Conference process more fragile and some may interpret the postponement of the Summit as a sign of a lack of commitment to the process. Finally, the delay will necessitate unforeseen budget adjustments.

56. Nevertheless, the postponement of the Nairobi Summit gives additional time for the fine-tuning of all the documents; enhanced communication, sensitization and resource mobilization campaigns; increased involvement of important stakeholders from civil society, women, youth, parliamentarians and private sector in the preparation of the implementation phase of the International Conference; and more substantial and meticulous preparation of the follow-up mechanism. The political authorities of the core countries should also use the additional time to further select and prioritize the number and content of the draft protocols and projects with more realism and pragmatism.

57. In order to maintain the momentum and to enhance the visibility of the International Conference up to and until the holding of the second Summit, the national coordinators, at their last meeting in Nairobi on 7 November 2005, agreed on the holding, during the first half of 2006, of additional regional consultations with: legal and financial experts to fine tune the protocols and projects; parliamentarians, to ensure the support of the national legislative institutions, as they are the authorities that would in most cases need to ratify the proposed Pact, approve the budget for the implementation phase and disseminate the message to their constituents; the private sector, to bring in needed contributions to the financing and implementation of major projects, especially in the economic area; and civil society organizations, to ensure that their concerns are not forgotten by their Governments. Important political and diplomatic regional meetings of the national coordinators of the Regional Preparatory Committee and the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee are also planned before the second Summit of the International Conference in Nairobi.

VII. Observations and recommendations

58. The postponement of the second Summit has affected the momentum reached in the Conference process. Every effort should be made by the countries of the region to ensure the convening of the Nairobi Summit as early as possible, to both maintain momentum and to build on the gains and achievements made thus far.

59. I encourage the members of the Security Council to convey a strong message of support for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and to urge member countries to renew their commitment to respecting the spirit and content of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration and undertake every effort to hold the Nairobi Summit and sign the Security, Stability and Development Pact. It is also pressing

that a date for the second Summit be agreed upon and publicized rapidly since this will send a strong and much-needed signal that the process is still on track.

60. The International Conference has succeeded in reducing the initial number of draft protocols and projects by half. Although it can still be seen as too high, reducing it has been a complex and sensitive exercise among member countries of the International Conference, necessitating a number of compromises. In addition, I would like to stress that the countries of the region have made considerable efforts in priority setting following the meetings of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member countries of the International Conference process and their counterparts from the Group of Friends which took place in New York in September 2005.

61. Nevertheless, more prioritization should and could be done and this should be undertaken ahead of forthcoming regional meetings leading to the second Summit in Nairobi. There should also be a more accurate sequencing in the implementation of the draft protocols and projects. While the protocols are meant to legally bind the signatories on issues of principle such as non-aggression, fighting impunity, preventing the illegal exploitation of natural resources and protecting internally displaced persons through recognized regional legal instruments, projects have a concrete time frame and budget and can therefore be better sequenced, according to their urgency, importance and feasibility.

62. Public awareness of the International Conference also needs to be heightened. An improved information, communication and sensitization strategy needs to be elaborated and implemented at national, regional and international levels in order to mobilize support for the implementation of the draft Security, Stability and Development Pact.

63. In the same spirit, at their last meeting, the national coordinators proposed the appointment of two eminent persons as high-level goodwill ambassadors to support the Conference: one representing the region and the other the international community.

64. Finally, the International Conference process should be seen as a critical regional approach to peacebuilding. Following the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Conference represents an excellent opportunity for regional peacebuilding that should not be wasted. It would be regrettable to allow, at this late stage, loss of momentum after so many resources have been devoted to successfully bringing so many conflicting parties together. The adoption and the implementation of the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact could potentially provide the peoples of the region with the durable peace and the economic and social development they greatly deserve.

65. It is crucial to ensure that there is an orderly transition in transferring the functions of the Joint African Union/United Nations secretariat to a regional mechanism after the conclusion of the second Summit. There is a clear relevance and nexus between the mandated activities of the International Conference and the principles, intent and goals enunciated by the Security Council in its resolution 1625 (2005) and the responsibilities devolved to me in paragraph 3 of that resolution. My Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region can play a valuable role in providing support for preventive diplomacy initiatives. In addition, he will continue to serve as a useful focal point for United Nations political activities, especially in the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional or

subregional organizations, pending the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the application of its mandate to the conflict situations in the Great Lakes region.

66. I therefore count on the continuing support of the Security Council to the Office of my Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region for a further period of six months after the signing of the Security, Stability and Development Pact. At that time, I would undertake an assessment of the role of the United Nations in the implementation of the different provisions of the Pact.

67. I also take this opportunity to commend my Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, and his team for all the work undertaken in preparation for the International Conference.

Annex I

Post-Dar-es-Salaam meetings for the elaboration of the draft programmes of action, protocols and projects

• 14-16 February 2005	First meeting of the Regional Preparatory Committee, Kigali
• 15-18 February 2005	First meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee Ministers, Kigali
• 4-8 April 2005	First meeting of the technical thematic task force, Mombasa, Kenya
• 27 June-1 July 2005	Second meeting of the technical thematic task force, Nairobi
• 18-21 July 2005	Second meeting of the Regional Preparatory Committee, Lusaka
• 22-23 July 2005	Second meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, Lusaka
• 5-11 September 2005	Third meeting of the technical thematic task force, Nairobi
• 26-30 September 2005	Third meeting of the Regional Preparatory Committee, Luanda
• October 2005	Third meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee did not take place owing to the postponement of the second summit

Annex II

Meetings held in 2006

Period	*Activity*	*Host country*
January 2006	Regional meeting of legal experts	Congo
30 and 31 January 2006	Meeting of the Regional Preparatory Committee	Kenya
February 2006	Meeting of Parliamentarians	Democratic Republic of the Congo
February 2006	Regional meeting of financial and budgetary experts	Uganda
	Meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee preceded by a meeting of national coordinators	Central African Republic
March 2006	Meeting of regional economic communities	African Union Commission, Addis Ababa
April 2006	Meeting of the private sector	Zambia
April 2006	Meeting of national coordinators	To be determined
May 2006	Women, youth and civil society	Rwanda
	Media	Burundi
Period to be decided	Meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee preceded by a meeting of the national coordinators	To be determined
Second half of July or first half of September 2006	Possibility of summit of Heads of State and Government [*to be confirmed*]	Kenya